FINAL REPORT

20020010

QUALITY ASSURANCE TRAINING
FOR SASKATCHEWAN'S HORTICULTURE SECTOR

March, 2004
Funded by the Agri-Food Innovation Fund

Prepared by: Saskatchewan Fruit Growers Association

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On-Farm Food Safety – Quality Assurance Training for Saskatchewan's Horticulture Sector

Final Report

Project # 20020010
March 2004

Agri-Food Innovation Fund
Quality Assurance Sector

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In Association with: Saskatchewan Fruit Growers Association
Saskatchewan Vegetable Growers Association
Saskatchewan Greenhouse Growers Association
Saskatchewan Nursery Trades Association
Saskatchewan Seed Potato Growers Association

Abstract

This project had four main objectives. Firstly, cover administration costs for the program. Secondly, provide media training to the provincial horticulture on-farm food safety trainers. These trainers would be the first-line of defense to deal with any food related problems with the media. This initiative enables Saskatchewan to take a leading role in on-farm food safety for horticulture producers. Thirdly, provide funding for two members from Saskatchewan to attend On-Farm Food Safety committee meetings outside of the province. This committee addressed how the horticulture industry would prepare commodities to enter into the technical review of their program through the CFIA. Fourthly, provide updates for our provincial trainers as needed.

Project Summary:

This project had four main objectives: 1) To cover administration costs for the program; 2) To provide media training to the provincial horticultural on-farm food safety trainers; 3) To provide funding for two members from Saskatchewan to attend On-Farm Food Safety committee meetings outside of the province; 4) To provide updates for our provincial trainers as needed.

Technical Report:

Background and Objectives

One objective of this project is to have our trained trainers for horticulture in Saskatchewan provided with media training so that they can properly outline the value of an on-farm food safety program to the media. These trainers would also be the first-line of defence to deal with any food related problems with the media. The other objective is having representatives from Saskatchewan sit on the National On-Farm Food Safety Committee in Canadian Horticulture Council (CHC).

This initiative enables Saskatchewan to take a leading role in on-farm food safety for horticulture producers. Trained trainers allow the province to have experienced staff that can attend and speak at grower meetings and conferences. It also provides Saskatchewan with the expertise and personnel to deliver the program to producers when there is a need. Most other provinces have taken these courses, and now have government employees, private consultants and field representatives from grower organizations who are officially trained.

Provincial governments have taken a leadership role in on-farm food safety programs in many other provinces. They have seen the benefits in having accredited personnel on-hand to ensure that produce originating from their province is safe. The Canadian Produce Marketing Association (CPMA) holds the CHC's On Farm Food Safety Program as the standard for fresh fruit and vegetables in Canada.

Project Activities

1) Program Administration

This takes into account work done by representatives of the Saskatchewan Fruit Growers Association to run this program on behalf of the other horticultural associations (Saskatchewan Vegetable Growers Association, Saskatchewan Greenhouse Growers Association, Saskatchewan Nursery Trades Association and Saskatchewan Seed Potato Growers Association). These tasks

include production and distribution of brochures, mail outs, administering the bank account, preparing financial spreadsheets and paying bills out of that account. Program administration was carried out by Charon Blakley and Helen Fraser, Secretary-Treasurers of the Saskatchewan Fruit Growers Association.

2) Media Training

This training was provided to ensure that our trainers have the experience needed to deal with all situations, including how to deal effectively with media.

In the event of produce-related illnesses in the province, our trainers would be called upon by the media to explain the program, explain what went wrong in the situation that exists currently and how it can be fixed. Trainers would also alert media to the training that they are providing to our provincial growers to ensure Saskatchewan produces safe produce.

Trainers that attended the media training course were Elaine Waldner – vegetables, Oliver Green – vegetables, James Wiens – fruit. Attending on behalf of Saskatchewan Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization were Glen Sweetman – greenhouse and nursery specialist, Clarence Peters – fruit specialist and Andrew Sullivan – vegetable specialist.

3) National On-Farm Food Safety Committee

A committee was formed at the national level to address how the horticulture industry would prepare commodities to enter into the technical review of their program through the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. Each province was asked to have two representatives on the committee to ensure their concerns were addressed.

In Saskatchewan, Deb Hart, Manager of the Saskatchewan Seed Potato Growers Association and Sandra Purdy, President of the Saskatchewan Fruit Growers Association were chosen as Saskatchewan's representatives. Participation included responding to e-mails, attending conference calls and meetings held on the subject in Ottawa.

4) Provide Updates

This has been done by Clarence Peters, Provincial Fruit Specialist, Glen Sweetman, Provincial Greenhouse and Nursery Specialist and Andrew Sullivan, Provincial Vegetable Specialist with Saskatchewan Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization. They provided the group with any new information or updates that were sent out through the Canadian Horticulture Council or any other quality assurance initiatives seen in their industries.

Results and Conclusions

The result of this project is that our horticultural on-farm food safety trainers were trained on how to deal with media inquiries in a professional manner. All trainers are now fully prepared to deal with any media calls related to on-farm food safety.

The national committee was pivotal in helping to set up the groundwork for the material that is now moving towards its first technical review. Potatoes will be the first commodity to go under a technical review in horticulture, which will take place in early 2005. It was important that Saskatchewan sent representatives on their behalf to ensure that the national system was set up to benefit our provincial producers.

Personnel

Administration

- Helen Fraser
- Charon Blakley

Media training

- James Wiens
- Oliver Green
- Elaine Waldner
- Deanna Herman – Instructor

National On-Farm Food Safety Committee

- Sandra Purdy
- Deb Hart

Innovation Fund Acknowledgement

Acknowledgement of the funding provided by the Agri-Food Innovation Fund (AFIF) was given at the media training session provided in Saskatoon.

The Saskatchewan Horticultural Associations (Saskatchewan Fruit Growers Association, Saskatchewan Vegetable Growers Association, Saskatchewan Greenhouse Growers Association, Saskatchewan Nursery Trades Association, and the Saskatchewan Seed Potato Growers Association) would like to thank the Agri-Food Innovation Fund for providing funding that allowed the associations to begin training in on-farm food safety for their operations.